

RELIGIOUS INQUIRER.

COME NOW, AND LET US REASON TOGETHER.—ISAIAH 1. 13.

EDITED BY REV. R. CARRIQUE.—PUBLISHED BY AN ASSOCIATION OF GENTLEMEN.

VOL. III.]

HARTFORD, (CONN.) NOVEMBER 15, 1823.

[NO. 1.

From the (Boston) Universalist Magazine.

ORIGIN OF PROFANE SWEARING.

Mr. Editor.—Having read your paper with a great degree of attention, I am constrained to acknowledge, that I think it is your design to give support to doctrine which is purely evangelical, and to discountenance all that is derogatory to the true character of the Deity.

With these considerations weighing heavily upon my mind, I beg leave, through your instrumentality, to offer the following ideas, which I earnestly desire may serve the cause of truth.

The motives which induce me to write thus are good. When we behold our fellow men travelling to eternity, with their minds blinded by superstition; when we see preachers arise in the sacred desk, and hear them publish doctrine which is inconsistent with the nature of the Deity; when we know that the minds of young people are contaminated with this doctrine, what feelings will not be excited? What men will not raise his feeble voice, as a barrier to this prevailing evil? Who would not snatch the hidden talent from the earth and put it in exercise to oppose these mighty torrents of theological error.

We do not wish to infer, that any class of christians intentionally derogate from the character of Jehovah; but we have our fears that some, through inadvertency, are so unfortunate. Indeed, we have sufficient evidence to believe, that many of our Rev. clergy, not only misrepresent the true character of God, but give support to immorality.

Start not, friendly reader, this expression is, in truth, categorical; but we will endeavour to show that it is too true for the advancement of the glorious cause of truth and morality.

We wish, however, to request, before we discuss this subject, that superstition may not be permitted to exercise unlimited sway over human reason; that things which have been handed down by tradition may not have any influence upon the mind; but that candor and sincerity may prevail.

Profanity is a heinous crime. Consider it in any point of view, it will appear detestable, vain and foolish. What profit then is to be derived from an engagement in this practice? None; On the contrary, the profane swearer often loses his character, connections and happiness by his misconduct in this respect.

Its almost universal prevalence leads us to suppose, that men have an idea of something, which they think justifies them in this respect. If this be the case, we must remove the object of their justification, or prove to them, that it is not the cause of their error. We are constrained to think, that the preaching from the sacred desk, does, in a degree, support this crime; and if we can produce evidence to establish this point, we shall have enough confidence in the candour of our brethren, to believe they will forsake doctrine which has so fatal a tendency. We do not wish to exhibit any unchristian feelings, or to proceed in a way which is in the least reprehensible; our object is widely different; we wish to do something that will ultimate in the annihilation of profanity, to the honor of God, and to the universal benefit of man. Surely this is a duty in

which every class of christians should unite—preachers of all denominations should wave their particular tenets, when on this subject, and like one stupendous whole, exert themselves for the accomplishment of this much desired object.

But caution is very necessary. The peccability of human nature renders it highly important, that men, in whatsoever situation they are placed, should be careful not to give the least support to a vice they are endeavoring to suppress. It may perhaps be the case, and, as we said before, we cannot think to the contrary, that preachers, sometimes through inadvertency, and sometimes through the influence of a traditional notion, sanction a practice, which at other times they would declaim against with great vehemence. This may appear a little heterogeneous at the first view; but the consideration, by which the writer is influenced, makes it appear perfectly clear to him. It has been asserted, as an opinion, that some of our ministers, while their desires and prayers are for its suppression, give support to profanity. To prove this, we will inquire for its origin. What first induced men to hurl anathemas at each other's heads? Where did they first receive the notion of calling upon God to damn their neighbours soul to endless ages of eternity? Where did they first get the idea that God ever did, or ever will consign any human being to endless despair?

We believe, that profanity had its origin, in the preaching of a system of damnation; and we believe, that this system of damnation had its origin, in an erroneous idea of the character of God, which proceeds from a misconstruction of the scriptures. Now does it not appear reasonable to suppose, that the preaching of this system serves to countenance the practice which these remarks are intended to annihilate? We do think every unprejudiced mind will answer in the affirmative.

Some, however, may still doubt; we will suggest a few more remarks, which will finally demonstrate it.

The most of the oaths which are taken, are denunciations upon the person addressed, or the person spoken of; and frequently they are requests, sent to the Almighty, to damn the soul of one of his creatures to endless pain. Now observe: It is well known, that some of our ministers preach the damnation of a part of mankind; and they do not stop here; they declare, with a tone and countenance, which would suit the chambers of the cruel Inquisition, that God has declared in the holy scriptures, that some part of the human race will be eternally miserable, i. e. damned. This is the cause of people's using profane language. The hearers certainly can feel justified in calling upon God to exercise damnation, when their preachers tell them, he will do so. In fact we will venture to affirm, that this is the only excuse profane swearers can command to justify their irreligious conduct.

O! Christians, does not this lamentable story look probable? Does it not appear natural to suppose, that man, whose nature is incidental to sin, will seize upon everything in his power to justify his sinfulness? You must say yes. You must now be constrained to declare, that what you never before considered appears not only probable but alarming.

Friendly brethren, if you were interrogated respecting

St. Price

the origin of profanity, what could you give for an answer? Could you say, that this vice always existed, and that you took your system of damnation from that? Or would you be honest and say, that although you never thought of it before—although you were perfectly innocent in preaching so, you are now sensible, that you have not only passed over it with impunity, but with approbation? O no, says a friend, with impunity and approbation? O no, that will never do; we always preached to profane swearers, that if they did not desist from their wicked practices, they would suffer eternal damnation. Well, worthy brother, you have been informed, that from this system of damnation arose the sin of profanity. Have I not proved that the preaching of this system tends to increase the practice? How then can you punish men for doing what you do, when you think you are doing your duty? What is the difference between pulpit profanity and street profanity? There is none; neither of them is supported by the word of God.

Our preachers pray that their hearers may not forget what they hear, so soon as they leave the house of worship, but that they may carry a part of the discourse with them through the week; that they may imbibe its sentiments, and live according to it in all things.—Could God answer such a prayer as this? Would it not be incompatible with the purity of his character, to cause men to imbibe sentiments so vicious? The sacrifice of the wicked is an abomination to the Lord.

To believers in Universal Salvation, it may not be improper to say, that they have no excuse for using profane language; there would be an opposition between conversation and profession, if they were to do so. If preachers persist in their endeavours to propagate these systems, to which they have arrogated the name of orthodoxy, and which will justify their hearers in immorality, let Universalists prove by their actions, that their doctrine tends to uprightness of conduct, and love to God and mankind.

Many people say, the doctrine of Universal Salvation tends to licentiousness; if they believed it they would go on in all manner of wickedness; (while all the time they are crying, honesty is the best policy) they would curse and swear, lie and steal; they say that it is a good doctrine to live by, but a very bad one to die by; the grand sink of moral iniquity. This appears extremely irrational. Profanity carries an absurdity with it, when connected with Universalism. How can a man, and keep reason at his side, call upon God to damn one of his fellow being to all eternity, if he believes in the final restoration of all things?

My feeble comprehension will not permit me to sufficiently investigate this subject. I hope soon to see abler pens than mine publishing absurdities to the world, which have long remained in obscurity, veiled by traditional notions. Many things appear to discourage such researches; but the truth is powerful, and will finally prevail. Here stand the much esteemed ministry, already to hurl the threatnings of everlasting burnings upon you, if you examine their doctrine in order to expose its errors. But, friendly brethren, men are now too enlightened to rest their belief upon the unsupported hypothesis of fanatics; they are not any longer to be entertained with enigmas, since God hath said, let there be light.

If these preachers could support their doctrine by candid reasoning, and scripture testimony, you would not find them among their parishoners, telling that Universalism tends to licentiousness; that it will do to live by, but not to die by; no; they would use stronger arguments than these. They do not even perceive that they confute their doctrine, in this way. First, say it tends to licentiousness, and then, that it will do live by! A thing which tends to licentiousness, every species of vice, will do to live by!! On another occasion they will run a different course, and hold up a supposed hell, which, they say, burns with endless flames, to mortal view. Sometimes they may be sin-

ners, although in error; but when we hear them say, Repent ye, repent ye, for the kingdom of hell is at hand, we know they speak exactly opposite to the apostle, who said, "Repent ye, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand."

We will forbear, for we are tired of inquiring into inconsistencies. Every thing we bring to view, from their abortive reasoning, appears nonsensical. O! that I could impress upon my fellow men, the importance of rightly investigating these things. Why will ye be any longer priest-ridden? Why will ye be any longer superstitious? Why will ye not wipe off these foolish notions, in which you have been traditioned? Arise, shake the dust from your feet; lay the axe at the root of the tree; that we may all rejoice together, in a complete emancipation from religious slavery; that we may behold God as he is, over all, blessed forevermore. W.

From *Buck's Theological Dictionary*.

ON PERSECUTION.

Persecution is any pain or affliction which a person designedly inflicts upon another; and, in a more restrained sense, the sufferings of Christians on account of their religion. Persecution is threefold. 1. *Mental*, when the spirit of a man riseth up and opposes another.—2. *Verbal*, when men give hard words and deal in uncharitable censures.—3. *Actual or open by the hand*, such as the dragging of innocent persons before the tribunal of justice, Matt. x. 13. The unlawfulness of persecution for conscience sake must appear plain unto every one that possesses the least degree of thought or of feeling. "To banish, imprison, plunder, starve, hang, and burn men for religion," says the shrewd Jortin, "is not the Gospel of Christ; it is the gospel of the devil. Where persecution begins, Christianity ends. Christ never used any thing that looked like force or violence, except once; and that was to drive bad men out of the temple, and not to drive them in."

We know the origin of it to be from the prince of darkness, who began the dreadful practice in the first family on earth, and who, more or less, has been carrying on the same work ever since, and that almost among all parties. "Persecution for conscience sake," says Dr. Doddridge, "is every way inconsistent, because, 1. It is founded on an absurd supposition that one man has a right to judge for another in matters of religion.—2. It is evidently opposite to that fundamental principle of morality, that we should do to others as we could reasonably desire they should do to us.—3. It is by no means calculated to answer the end which its patrons profess to intend by it.—4. It evidently tends to produce a great deal of mischief and confusion in the world.—5. The Christian religion must, humanely speaking, be not only obstructed, but destroyed, should persecuting principles universally prevail.—6. Persecution is so far from being required or encouraged by the Gospel that it is most directly contrary to many of its precepts, and indeed to the whole of it."

The chief objects who have fell a prey to this diabolical spirit have been Christians; a short account of whose sufferings we shall here give, as persecuted by Jews, Heathens, and those of the same name.

1. *Persecution of Christians by the Jews.* Here we need not be copious, as the New Testament will inform the reader more particularly how the first Christians suffered for the cause of truth. Jesus Christ himself was exposed to it in the greatest degree. The four evangelists record the dreadful scenes, which need not here be enlarged on. After his death, the apostles suffered every evil which the malice of the Jews could invent, and their mad zeal execute. They who read the Acts of the Apostles, will find that, like their Master, they were despised and rejected of men, and treated with the utmost indignity and contempt.

2. *Persecution of Christians by the Heathens.* Historians usually reckon ten general persecutions, the first of

which was under the Emperor Nero, thirty-one years after our Lord's ascension, when that emperor, having set fire to the city of Rome, threw the odium of that execrable action on the Christians. First, those were apprehended who openly avowed themselves to be of that sect; then by them were discovered an immense multitude, all of whom were convicted. Their death and tortures were aggravated by cruel derision and sport; for they were either covered with the skins of wild beasts, and torn in pieces by devouring dogs, or fastened to crosses, and wrapped up in combustible garments, that, when the day-light failed, they might, like torches, serve to dispel the darkness of the night. For this tragical spectacle Nero lent his own gardens; and exhibited at the same time the public diversions of the circus; sometimes driving a charriot in person, and sometimes standing as a spectator, while the shrieks of women burning to ashes supplied music for his ears.—2. The second general persecution was under Domitian, in the year 95, when 40,000 were supposed to have suffered martyrdom.—3. The third began in the third year of Trajan, in the year 100, and was carried on with great violence for several years.—4. The fourth was under Antoninus when the Christians were banished from their houses, forbidden to shew their heads, reproached, beaten, hurried from place to place, plundered, imprisoned and stoned.—5. The fifth began in the year 197, under Severus when great cruelties were committed. In this reign happened the martyrdom of Perpetua and Felicitas, and their companions. Perpetua had an infant at the breast, and Felicitas was just delivered at the time of their being put to death. These two beautiful and amiable young women, mothers of infant children, after suffering much in prison, were exposed before an insulting multitude, to a wild cow, who mangled their bodies in a most horrid manner; after which they were carried to a conspicuous place and put to death by the sword.—6. The sixth began with the reign of Maximinus, in 235.—7. The seventh, which was the most dreadful ever known, began in 250, under the Emperor Decius, when the Christians were in all places driven from their habitations, stripped of their estates, tormented with racks, &c.—8. The eighth began in 257, under Valerian. Both men and women suffered death, some by scourging, some by the sword, and some by fire.—9. The ninth was under Aurelian, in 274; but this was inconsiderable, compared with the others before mentioned.—10. The tenth began in the nineteenth year of Diocletian, 303. In this dreadful persecution, which lasted ten years, houses filled with Christians were set on fire; and whole droves were tied together with ropes, and thrown into the sea. It is related that 17,000 were slain in one month's time; and that, during the continuance of this persecution, in the province of Egypt alone, no less than 144,000 Christians died by the violence of their persecutors; besides 700,000 that died through the fatigues of banishment, or the public works to which they were condemned.

[TO BE CONTINUED.]

COMMUNICATIONS.

FOR THE INQUIRER.

The Hell in which Dr. Campbell supposes sinners will be punished after the resurrection.

Dr. C. having given his opinion that the Greek *Hades* ought never to be translated Hell, in the Bible, it signifying, as he supposes, the state of departed souls, both good and bad, between the death of the body and the resurrection of it, and having refuted this his own opinion, by maintaining that Paul expected to be immediately with Christ, in the resurrection state, when he should depart this life, has, apparently, never thought of relinquishing his heathenish notions of a state of endless torment, after

the destruction of the flesh, with its propensities and lusts, by death. That there is a place of future punishment Dr. C. thinks is beyond all doubt. This place he thinks is denoted by the term *Gehenna*. He says, "That *Gehenna* is employed, in the New Testament, to denote the place of future punishment, prepared for the Devil and his Angels, is indisputable." But, what is surprising, he says, in the very next sentence, "in the Old Testament we do not find this place in the same manner mentioned." Now it is, to me, a matter of great wonder that there is no Old-Testament-Hell, where the devil and his angels are consigned in the future invisible world. I do not learn that the New Testament professes any thing more, or less, than to bring "life and immortality to light." Therefore this place of punishment, in the other world, called *Gehenna*, must be an ingredient of what are called life and immortality; an ingredient of what Paul denominates "a better covenant, founded upon better promises." The old covenant, or Old Testament, says Paul, "could not give life;" but was "a ministration of death;" and he says, "if that were glorious much more doth the ministration of life exceed in glory." Now, according to Dr. C. one very important particular, wherein the new-covenant exceeds the old in glory, is, it hath established, or brought to light, a place of future, interminable misery, unknown, and of course, most probably, not existing during the "ministration of death." And what must be the name of this newly created, or discovered, place of eternal torment? Why, says Dr. C. it must not be *Hades*. He says, "In my judgment it ought never in scripture to be rendered *Hell*; at least in the sense wherein that word is now universally understood by christians." Wherefore? Why christians are those to whom "life and immortality are brought to light," and, of course, they must have a *Hell* in comparison with which *Hades* is a mere glow worm. *Hades* may express the state of damned souls, as well as the state of blessed ones, for the short period which may intervene between death and the resurrection; but it must be a stronger term to convey the christian idea of imperishable death, and immortal damnation!!! And pray what is the hideous term? Dr. C. finds it in *Gehenna*. And whence did this *Gehenna* originate? and how came it to be expressive of the New Testament, or better covenant-hell? Dr. C. says, "It is originally a compound of the two Hebrew words *ge hinnom*, the valley of Hinnom; a place near Jerusalem, of which we hear first in the book of Joshua. (Josh. 15, 8.—18, 16. 2 Chron. 33, 6. 2 Kings 23, 10.) It was there that the cruel sacrifices of children were made by fire to Moloch, the Amoulish idol." (It is now, according to Dr. C. and christians generally, where the merciful sacrifices are to be eternally made, not to Moloch but to the God of Heaven!!) Now, in the name of all that is reasonable and just I desire to know what makes the valley of Hinnom, or a fire in the valley of Hinnom, near Jerusalem, signify, under God's New and everlasting covenant, (which Paul says consists in his writing his laws in the mind and heart) a place of torment in the future immortal state? Is there a passage, a sentence, in all the New Testament, which says, or even intimates, that "when this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal immortality," there will some of the human race be consigned to *Gehenna*, the valley of Hinnom? No, there is not a sentence, nor a word, that gives the most distant intimation of any such thing. So far from any intimations of misery, after this event, there is abundance of the plainest testimony to the contrary. "There shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain." Indeed this would be the irresistible conclusion from the very nature of things. What is immortality? Ans. "God alone hath immortality." He alone is possessed of "life never to end." He alone is "the same, yesterday, to day and forever." Then God's own nature must be conferred upon us to render us immortal. "God must be all in all," or we cease to exist. Hence immortal devils, immortal devil's angels, immortal sinners,

and, consequently, immortal death, immortal misery and pain, are the most gross, heathenish, barbarous absurdities.

Of this same description is hell; "at least in the sense wherein that word is now" (almost) "universally understood by christians." It is the immortal *Gehenna*! the immortal valley of Hinnom, near Jerusalem!! It is a place. Dr. C. calls it a place. This place, this immortal place, as a place of future punishment, either for immortal sinners or immortal devils, came into existence the ——— knows when, or where, or how. Neither in the accounts of the creation, or new creation, is there a word said about this hell; this *gehenna*, or valley of Hinnom. In my humble opinion, therefore, all hells, of every name and description, which denote darkness, sorrow, distress and anguish, as the portion of the wicked and impenitent, are hells of their own make; and they are made by opposition to wisdom, truth and love; in a word, by opposition to God. As God, therefore, is, in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, there will be no hell, of any name whatsoever, when the work of reconciliation is completed. This will be "in the dispensation of the fulness of times." Amen.

Even so come Lord Jesus.

JOHN BROOKS.

Bernardston, Oct. 17, 1823.

FOR THE INQUIRER.

MR. EDITOR.—A few words in explanation of the last two verses in the 5th ch. of Jeremiah. "*A wonderful and horrible thing is committed in the land; The prophets prophecy falsely, and the priests bear rule by their means; and my people love to have it so: and what will ye do in the end thereof?*" will be gratifying to your friend and brother in the faith and love of the Gospel of peace.

E. G.

In compliance with the request of our friend, we would observe, that if Politicians and Civilians have been correct, in their views of the intent and design of government, and the rights of man; then it is evident that every man is endowed, as the gift of his Creator, with certain privileges as his birth right, of which no one in justice can deprive him. It has been said that all men are born "free and equal," this in a certain sense is true. There are peculiar, unalienable rights which every man is possessed of. In civil government, in choosing his rulers, and judging upon the expediency and profitableness of the laws by them enacted. In religion, in determining for himself as to the mode and manner in which he shall worship his God, in all those particulars which are not specifically laid down in the Bible. The observance of religious ceremonies, or what is termed devotion, must be a voluntary act on the part of the worshiper; to be acceptable to God it must be free, and proceed from a heart sensible of its dependence and numerous obligations. In this, every man must be at liberty to judge for himself. He who worships, according to the dictates and will of another, does not act conscientiously and understandingly, nor can he worship in a manner that can benefit him as a moral and religious being. God requires that we should worship with the spirit and with the understanding. This we cannot do while yielding to the dictates of others, and believing in a God whose mode of existence we cannot comprehend, whose dealings, with his creatures, carry the aspect of cruelty and an exercise of arbitrary power, the whole dispensations of whose providence are wrapped up in darkness and mystery.

Man was formed for liberty, and the enjoyment of that independence which is compatible with the general interest and welfare of that society with which he is connected. Thus formed and endowed by his maker, all the dealings of his God toward him, and all manifestations of LIGHT and TRUTH, are, and must be, consistent with that liberty. This we find demonstrated by the character of the gospel, and the nature of the TRUTH therein revealed. Christ

said, "if ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed; and ye shall know the truth, and the TRUTH shall make you free." According to this declaration, a man ignorant of the truth is in a state of bondage and slavery. Falsehood then, enslaves the mind and keeps it bound in the non chains of despotic bondage. This truth holds good both in spiritual and temporal concerns, in religion as well as in politics. Under the influence of truth men enjoy liberty of conscience, and act independently in matters of religion, exercising the mental powers they possess in the investigation of whatever is presented for their belief; while falsehood denies the privilege of examination, and, in an arbitrary manner, demands implicit and blind obedience to whatever is offered, under severe and heavy penalties in case of refusal.

An Apostle has exhorted us, to stand fast in the liberty wherewith Christ has made us free, and not again to be entangled with a yoke of bondage. The law of God is called "a perfect law of liberty." Thus we find that God, in all His works, is perfectly consistent. He formed man to enjoy liberty, His law is a law of liberty, His truth maketh free, and He sent His Son to give liberty to captives, to open the prison doors, to break every yoke and to let the oppressed go free. When the mistaken disciples, aspiring after dominion and power, disputed among themselves who should be the greatest, Jesus said unto them, "if any man desire to be first, the same shall be last of all, and servant of all," again "Neither be ye called masters; for one is your master, even Christ. But he that is greatest among you shall be your servant." Paul saith, we preach not ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord, and ourselves your servants for Jesus sake. By all this it is very clear, that in the introduction of the gospel ministry it was not designed that ministers should rule the people, or lord it over God's heritage. It was not given to them, to exercise dominion, nor to control by arbitrary power the consciences of men; as the servants (not the Lords and judges) of the people they were to serve them by teaching them the way of life, and by their sincerity, benevolence, and candor to commend themselves and their doctrine to every man's conscience in the sight of God.

The same consistent mode of procedure, has attended the ways and works of God from the morn of creation through successive ages down to the present day. While Adam believed his maker, loved and obeyed the truth, he was free indeed, he breathed the pure air of liberty; but when he listened to falsehood, and obeyed the deceiver, he became a slave, and a slave to an inexorable tyrant. It is evident from the passages before us that while the PROPHETS prophesied TRUTH the people enjoyed their liberty, and the priests performed their duty as the servants of the people; and it was not, until the prophets prophesied falsely, that the priests were able to bear rule over the people.

The Israelites furnish a striking lesson, on the instability and weakness of the human mind, especially in a state of mental darkness or ignorance, and shows us how easily mankind may be imposed upon, and how fond they are of those delusions which make them an easy prey to the cunning and designing, who are seeking for authority and power. Many are the complaints, made against these people for making void the law of God by their traditions, and by introducing, into their religion, ceremonies and observances not contained in the laws and regulations given them by Moses. Let it be remembered that they always strictly adhered to the worship of God and attended to all religious forms and ceremonies; but deluded by false prophets, who added to it, such ceremonies, as had an imposing effect on the ignorant and credulous part of community, they gave the priest an ascendancy over them, and enabled them to bear rule. There is nothing that can have a greater effect upon an ignorant mind incapable of investigating any particular subject, than to be persuaded that in consequences of some special operation, producing an

effect upon the passions, called a change of heart, they not only become better men, but wiser than others, having obtained by this change a knowledge of divine things, which the wisest and most learned of men could never obtain without this change: and that in consequence of this knowledge by experience they are the peculiar favorites of heaven and the subjects of salvation, while all others are excluded from the favor and mercy of God. So much did the house of Israel love to have it so, that they attended more to the teaching of false prophets, than to the prophets of the Lord, the consequences of which, was, that blinded by their tradition they rejected the Messiah, despised the doctrine of the gospel, and are now suffering the consequences resulting from those delusions.

The passage will equally apply to the christian community. And we may say with the Prophet a "Wonderful and horrible thing is committed in the land." It is wonderful indeed that men, who seem to possess good sense, and who in the concerns of this life are men of understanding, close investigation, and deep discernment, should suffer themselves to be imposed upon in matters of religion, and receive as truth, without the least examination, whatever is presented to them for their belief; and it is a horrible thing that men have been so cheated, as to believe that they were doing God service in persecuting and murdering one another.

Whoever, carefully, examines the religion of Jesus as taught in the New Testament, will discover that it inculcates peace and good will, and teaches us to bear and forbear with one another, to seek each others welfare, and to do unto others as we would they should do unto us. Jesus said, his kingdom was not of this world—his ministers were the servants of the people—his laws, the law of liberty—his yoke was easy and his service light. But there has been a strange falling away from the pure simplicity of the gospel, as preached in the primitive ages of christianity. Ministers, instead of being servants, have become LORDS and RULE over the people; instead of being plain sincere preachers of the word, they have assumed the judgment seat—and unblushingly justify or condemn men—decide their fate and assign them to heaven or hell, as though they were the arbiters of men; they bear rule over the people who yield to their dictation, and who, in many instances, fear their preachers more than they do their God. And people love to have it so. They love the marvellous, they are pleased with parade and show, they delight to be noticed and distinguished as the peculiar favorites of heaven, and flattered with hopes of enjoying privileges in another world from which others are to be excluded.

Why is it that the priest's bear rule? Ans. The prophets have prophesied falsely.—Why do people submit to this rule and authority? Because they are under the influence of error, they believe in false doctrine, for the truth maketh free. If then any person feels himself in bondage, compelled to yield to the dictation of a domineering priest who undertakes not only to govern his faith and conscience in matters of religion, but attempts to dictate him in the government of his family, or his civil concerns in life, and will take the liberty to enquire, why am I thus a SLAVE—he will find that it is owing to falsehood and error, by which his mind is blinded.

FOR THE INQUIRER.

MR. EDITOR,—I learn from good authority, that a Calvinistic clergyman of this City, has recently declared in the pulpit, that Universalists *utterly deny* the mercy of God—because they maintain, that every man will receive according to his works. If his statement were of any force, it would certainly place us in company with Christ and his apostles, who are full in the doctrine, and whom we profess to follow. From this declaration, we are left to the conclusion, that in his apprehension, every act of *mercy* violates *justice*; and that the exercise of *justice* is at

the expense of *mercy*. It is really to be regretted, that those who receive large salaries for teaching the people, do not study the scriptures more closely than the traditions of men. In this case, the ignorance of the preacher would not have been exposed, by uttering a sentiment which is utterly opposed to a declaration I once read in a good old book:—"Unto thee also, O Lord, belongeth mercy, FOR THOU RENDEREST UNTO EVERY MAN ACCORDING TO HIS WORKS."

Until this objection appeared, we were frequently accused of rendering void the principle of justice; and the common sentiment that "A God all mercy is a God unjust," was frequently quoted against us. Thus, by the consent of our opponents, two *can* walk together and not be agreed—for every one of the *saved* is a monument of *injustice*, and the lost are the monuments of an *unmerciful*, vindictive justice.

But we have not so learned Christ. We are persuaded that justice requires nothing but the reconciliation of the creature, and that by the exercise of mercy this reconciliation will be effected. As sure as justice and judgment are the habitation of His throne—so sure, the mercy of the Lord endureth forever.

MILO.

RELIGIOUS INQUIRER.

SATURDAY, Nov. 15, 1823.

UNITARIAN CONTROVERSY.

The Christian world has been much agitated for several years by a controversy on the subject of the TRINITY. Whether, God exists in a plurality of persons, or possesses one indivisible essence or person existing in Unity. The question in dispute is simply this, *Is there ONE God, or are there THREE.* The word TRINITY signifies *three in one*, and is thus expressed in the Athanasian creed. And the Catholic faith is this; "that we worship one God in Trinity, and trinity in unity; neither confounding the persons, nor dividing the substance. For there is one person of the Father, another of the Son, and another of the Holy Ghost." Agreeable to the foregoing article, the assembly of divines convened in Saybrook in this State, adopted the following as an article of their faith, and to be believed by future generations, who enter into covenant relation in the Presbyterian Church,—Chap. 2. "In the unity of the Godhead there be three persons of one substance, power and eternity. God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Ghost. The Father is of none, neither begotten, nor proceeding; the Son is eternally begotten of the Father; the Holy Ghost proceeding from the Father and the Son. Which doctrine of the Trinity is the foundation of all our communion with God, and comfortable dependence upon him."

Unitarians derive their name from believing in the Unity of God, or that God is ONE. Indivisible in his nature, existing in one person only. In this controversy, men, eminent for their piety and learning, have been engaged on both sides the question, and no pains have been spared by them in searching the ancient languages in which the scriptures of the Old and New Testament were originally written, and all other languages in which these words and phrases appertaining to the subject have been used, that could throw any light upon the subject.

This controversy commenced in the early ages of Christianity, and has been carried on with more or less zeal in the several intervening centuries. At first the discussion of this subject was confined to the clergy. The laity were in general too ignorant to feel any interest in the controversy, and the subject too much involved in mystery and too dark and inexplicable for them to understand. With-

in a few years the controversy has been renewed with much zeal, and the laity as well as the clergy have entered into the merits of the question, and feel competent to decide for themselves on this point of doctrine. The consequence is, that thousands have renounced the idea of a Trinity in unity, or of a God existing in three persons and yet only one person, and have embraced what they consider as the most consistent; the belief of the existence of *one* only living and *true* God. Who is the Creator, Preserver, and Saviour of all men.

This controversy has not been confined to this continent. In England it has existed, and still continues. It has found its way to India, and the advocates for a *true* God have found it difficult to remove the objections that have been brought against their doctrine by those learned natives who have contended for the unity of God.

We have heretofore said little upon this subject in the *INQUIRER*, perhaps not so much, as some of our friends, who, disbelieve the Trinitarian system, would have wished. Our reason for not introducing the subject oftener, was, not because we consider it unworthy of notice, but because we viewed other points of doctrine more essentially necessary to be understood, and that more deleterious errors ought to be removed out of the way. Errors, which believed in, destroy our confidence in God, and weaken the foundation of our hope as christians.

One great error, is, that God will unmercifully punish his offending offspring for offences committed in this world, without any design to reclaim the offenders or that the punishment should ever have any salutary effect upon them. This belief in endless misery has been a source of trouble and anxious forebodings to millions of the human race; has spread sharp thorns on the pillow of the sick; and covered with the darkness of despair the habitation of the tomb.

The doctrine of the TRINITY like most other speculative opinions produces little or no effect on the sensitive powers, to create unhappiness or misery in the believer. It has ever been considered as involved in mystery, and beyond the reach of the most learned and ingenious of men to explain or understand; it has, therefore, passed over the mind as many metaphysical ideas or notions do, as things of course, and are assented to without producing any disagreeable effects on the feelings: but not so with those ideas or opinions respecting the doctrine of endless misery—The *wrath* of an *angry* God.—Vindictive Justice—and eternal DECREES of reprobation. These are the swords, in the hand of zealous bigots, with which the hearts of men are pierced and wounded, and by which the blood of millions has been made to crimson the ground. To remove these errors, so destructive to the peace of mankind, we have considered it most necessary to direct our labors, (*viz.*) To clear the character of our God from those foul aspersions that have been heaped upon it, by which He has been represented as an unmerciful tyrant, creating to destroy; forming beings susceptible of happiness for the purpose of rendering them the more miserable; and bringing them into existence totally depraved, incapable of doing any thing good, and then condemning them to endless suffering because they did not do good. These we consider things of the greatest moment, and which it is necessary first to remedy. As men become acquainted with the character of God, they view him as a being infinitely merciful and kind, behold all the dispensations of their Heavenly Father, as originating in, and being regulated and governed by love; and that all his messages to man have been messages of grace and peace, they will soon form a correct idea on the subject of the trinity, especially, if not taught, in early youth, the Westminster Catechism, and receive nought but plain scriptural declarations concerning Christ, the nature and intent of his mission, and his continual acknowledgement of dependence on Him who sent him, and whose will he came to do.

It must be obvious to every reflecting mind, that it is

altogether immaterial whether God exists in a trinity in unity, three *persons* in *one*, or, in *ONE* indivisible being existing in *one* person; if the same nature and properties are possessed by *HIM*. If God is filled with wrath toward his offending children and it will continue to exist through all eternity, it is immaterial to us whether he exist in three *persons*, or *one*, his wrath being infinite, and endless in its duration, it can be but infinite in degree and duration whether it exists in *one person* or *three*; and it is equally immaterial to us as to the TRINITY or UNITY if the same disposition exists to torment eternally, those who offend in this life. If the question involved the character of God, in relation to His JUSTICE, MERCY and GOODNESS, and there was no way to exonerate the character of our heavenly Father from these charges of cruelty, and injustice, but by solving this point, determining whether there are *three persons* in the Godhead or *one*, then would we zealously enter into the controversy, but this is not the case; the whole seems to turn on the mode of existence, and not as to any property or properties of the divine nature. It seems immaterial whether God governs men as a kind and affectionate parent governs his children, rewarding them for their virtues, and punishing them for their vices, but directing all his chastisements for the recovering of the offender; this is left out of the account, and it is admitted by many that God, though existing as *one person* or *being*, possesses all the vindictiveness which the trinity is supposed to possess and will exercise it toward his children.

Anxious therefore to remove from the mind those fatal errors which destroy the happiness of every sensitive and feeling heart, and involve men in gloomy melancholy, and distressing doubts produced by the apprehension of experiencing the wrath and curse of Almighty God, and being forever wretched; our labors have been directed to show the absurdity of believing that a Being infinite in love, had made rational and intelligent beings for the express purpose of glorifying himself in their wretchedness, or that a BEING, who is unchangeable in his nature, and who is said to be without variableness or shadow of turning, should be operated upon by the creatures of his power, creatures who live, move, and have their very being in him, and be made angry, and filled with wrath and vindictiveness towards them on account of their actions in this life, and who will never forgive and never cease to inflict punishment upon them, tormenting forever and ever. We have not the least doubt but that our youth will readily receive, and grow up in the knowledge of the one living and true God, as their minds are preserved from the absurdities of Divine wrath, an Eternal, Curse—particular election, total depravity and miraculous conversions, without so much being said on this subject. Trinitarians acknowledge that their doctrine is involved in mystery, and that it is out of the power of any one, however learned, to explain the subject to the understanding of another; that it is useless to reason upon it, as reason cannot reach it. It is inexplicable, and irreconcilable with any known principle or fact that can be illustrated by argument or demonstrated to the understanding of any rational being. They say they do not believe in three Gods, but in one God, existing in a trinity of persons, or three persons existing in one, forming one God. See Athanasian Creed "So the Father is God, the Son is God, and the Holy Ghost is God: and yet there are not *three* Gods, but *ONE* God,"—see also Saybrook confession of faith. "There is but *ONE* only living and true God." "In the *UNITY* of the Godhead there be *THREE persons* of one substance, power, and eternity." Some of the learned Trinitarians who have engaged in the late controversy, have disapproved of the use of this word *person*, as not expressing their meaning. The word *person* conveys to the mind the idea of a particular man, or being existing in separate identity from others. Three persons, therefore, must be three distinct beings existing separately, or abstractly, so as to admit of the application of numbers, as one, two, three, which cannot be the case if forming but one identity of person. Trinitarians there-

fore complain of the barrenness of the English language in not furnishing them with a word which will convey their meaning. Why then waste so much time on a subject which by one party is acknowledged, cannot be explained or proved, and which cannot be defended by any word in common use, while important subjects immediately affecting the happiness and peace of society, are passed by without notice, or admitted as truths.

JONAH.

It is a remarkable circumstance, that the prophet Jonah should shew so much vexation, that Ninevah was not literally destroyed according to his preaching. He had proclaimed in the streets of that city "Yet forty days and Ninevah shall be destroyed."—Having delivered his message, he chose a situation on a neighboring hill or mountain, where he could overlook the city, and behold its destruction. The forty days passed away, Ninevah still stood fast, and Jonah had the mortification to behold all things literally remaining as they were. Mortified by disappointment, he was grieved to the heart, and was willing to die, yea he desired to die. What Jonah! desire death! and for what? Would it have been more grateful to thy feelings to have had that city, with its numerous inhabitants, destroyed, than for thee to have misunderstood the nature and tendency of thy mission? A city in which was more than six score thousand persons that could not discern between their right hand and their left?

Jonah had preached that in forty days Ninevah should be destroyed. This he understood literally. The forty days expired and the city still remained. Jonah unwilling to be called a false prophet would rather have sacrificed the whole city, his pride destroyed all pity and compassion in his soul, and he was willing that both the innocent and guilty should be swallowed up in one common destruction rather than his character as a true prophet should be questioned.

QUERY.—Are there not some Jonah's among the prophets of the present day, who misunderstanding the nature of their message, and believing, that instead of the destruction, or finishing of sin, the eternal destruction, or endless misery of the sinner is intended, feel all that unwillingness which Jonah did, that Ninevah should be preserved, and who had rather that nine tenths of the human race, yea even those who cannot discern between the right hand and the left, should forever perish, than they should prove false teachers. We do not say this is the case, we only inquire whether it may not be; and the suggestion arises from that irritation and anger so frequently displayed, when the salvation of all men is mentioned, or attempted to be proved. Why this anger, why the many hard speeches which are used, if the love of precious souls lives in the heart accompanied with that ardent desire for the salvation of all men which is often breathed forth in prayer and exhibited in missions. When we see men exerting their learned ingenuity in doing away the force and meaning of the most plain and positive passages of scripture and by implication making others support the doctrine of endless misery, and find them showing anger when attempts are made to prove that God, in his divine mercy, will pardon and forgive his erring and offending children, and will make them eternally happy in himself, we are induced to say, that pride, the love of popularity, or partiality to their own particular systems, has destroyed all pity and compassion in their hearts, and that like Jonah they would rather that millions should perish than that they should be found false teachers.

✠ CALVINISTIC HOPE.

A certain zealous young clergyman, recently in a sermon, informed the members of his church, that there were many in HELL, that once had as good hopes of salvation, as they themselves now had. If this gentleman was correct in

his statement, of what use is this boasted christian HOPE? Calvinists will not allow a person to have a *hope* unless they have passed through the great work of conviction and conversion, and have joined the church; and it is frequently the case that we hear church members boasting of their expectations of going to Heaven, while others are destined to HELL. Now, if others, who have been church members, and who possessed as good a HOPE as those now living, are in Hell and will remain there to all eternity, of what use is it to pass through all these trials of mind, be converted and join the church, if after all a person may be damned. This is surely holding out good encouragement to a person to forsake all the pleasures and enjoyments of this life, and to travel the dark and dreary path religion is said to mark out, when after all his sacrifices, his *change of heart*, his church membership and his HOPEs he may be lost forever. We should suppose that a man wishing to produce a *revival*, would hold out some brighter prospects, something more enticing, and encouraging. At least grant that the hopes of his hearers may be realized, and all their labors meet with some little reward, so that they may be better off than those who have never embraced religion.

DEDICATION.

The New UNIVERSALIST CHURCH, in Philadelphia, was dedicated to the service of Almighty God, Oct. 17th, in the presence of a numerous and attentive auditory. Br. ABNER KNEELAND officiated on the occasion. In the evening, a Sermon was delivered by Br. Morse.

INTOLERANCE,

Is a word chiefly used in reference to those persons, churches, or societies, who do not allow men to think for themselves, but *impose* on them articles, creeds, ceremonies, &c. of their own devising. Nothing is more abhorrent from the genius of the christian religion than an intolerant spirit, or an intolerant church. "It has inspired its votaries with a savage ferocity; has plunged the fatal dagger into innocent blood; depopulated towns and kingdoms; overthrown states and empires, and brought down the righteous vengeance of heaven upon a guilty world. The pretence of superior knowledge, sanctity, and authority for its support, is the disgrace of reason, the grief of wisdom, and the paroxysm of folly. To fetter the conscience, is injustice; to ensnare it, is an act of sacrilege; but to torture it, by an attempt to force its feelings, is horrible intolerance; it is the most abandoned violation of all the maxims of religion and morality. Jesus Christ formed a kingdom purely spiritual; the apostles exercised only a spiritual authority under the direction of Jesus Christ; particular churches were united only by faith and love; in all civil affairs they submitted to civil magistracy; and in religious concerns they were governed by the reasoning, advice, and exhortations of their own officers: their censures were only honest reproofs; and their excommunications were only declarations that such offenders, being incorrigible, were no longer accounted members of their communities." Let it ever be remembered, therefore, that no man or men have any authority whatever from Christ to domineer over the consciences or persecute the persons of any whose religious principles agree not with their own.—[Buck's Theological Dictionary.]

From the Gospel Palladium.

MOTHER OF GOD.

An emigrant priest taught the French language to several young persons, whom he attended at their parents' houses. Two of my children were under his tuition; one of them a daughter, about fifteen. With her, after her exercise was over, he would sit and chat an hour. Religion was a frequent topic with them, as Monsieur was a fervid

Catholic, and my daughter a thorough paced Unitarian : I was often amused with their conversation, even when I had no part in it. The gentleman often had occasion to mention Mary, the Mother of Jesus, but he never called her by that scripture title ; on the contrary, he always called her the *holy Virgin Mary, Mother of MY God.*

One morning, as I sat writing in a distant part of the room, I heard the following conversation between them : "You say, Mr. C. that the Virgin Mary is the Mother of your God." "Yes, Mademoiselle, she be so." "By your God, I suppose you mean Jesus Christ, who you say, is God Almighty." "Pray, Sir, who is the Virgin Mary's Mother?" "St. Ann, Mademoiselle, St. Ann be the Virgin Mary's mother." "Then Sir, I suppose, that St. Ann is God Almighty's grand-mother." The poor priest blushed, paused and was evidently confused ; he recovered himself, and replied, "As *man*, Mademoiselle, St. Ann be the grand-mother of Jesus Christ." "If so, sir, then I suppose that St. Mary is the mother only of the *man* Christ Jesus, and not the mother of God, otherwise St. Ann *must* be God Almighty's grand-mother." Another pause of visible confusion followed. At last the gentleman exclaimed, "O, Mademoiselle, my good mother, the Holy Catholic Church do say that the holy Virgin Mary be the mother of God ; but she does not allow us to say, that St. Ann be the grand mother of God." "Sir, my father has taught me, that no church has authority to teach what is not taught in the Scriptures." "Ah, Mademoiselle, your father be one very good man, I do love him very much, but he be in very great dangerous errors. I do pray to the holy mother of my God, that he be convinced of his great errors." "Sir, I have no doubt but that my father is much obliged to you for your charitable prayers, for I have heard him say, that charity always edifies him ; but that he expects solid argument for the conviction of his mind." The priest hastily arose, and saying, "Bonjour, Mademoiselle, bonjour," and retired.

I cannot help noticing that truly protestant maxim, that "the Bible, the Bible only," is the religion of protestants. This maxim fully imbibed, gave to this intelligent child, the advantage over an aged and zealous Catholic priest.

Bishop Cadmus, of Bellay, although he did not much esteem the monkish gentry, was induced to accede to the pressing solicitations of the Franciscans of his diocese to pronounce a panegyric on their patron saint :—"Admire, Oh, Pandres," exclaimed the Bishop, "admire the extreme greatness of your Saint ; his miracles surpass those of the Son of God ! Our Saviour, with five loaves and three fishes, fed only 5,000 men in one day ; but St. Francis—amazement ! with a miserable yard of coarse linen, has known how to nourish for four centuries, day after day, more than 50,000 idlers and useless beings. What a stupendous miracle."—Copied from *El Centilla*, a weekly paper of Buenos Ayres.

A late Chinese emperor, on receiving information that his enemies had raised an insurrection in one of the distant provinces, said to some of his friends "Come, follow me, and I promise you we shall soon destroy them." He marched forward, and upon his approach the rebels submitted. All expected he was about to take a fearful revenge, and were astonished to see the captives treated with mildness and humanity. "Is this the manner in which you fulfil your promise ?" exclaimed his first minister.—"Your royal word was given that your enemies should be destroyed, and now you have pardoned all, and even condescend to caress some." "I promised," replied the emperor, with a generous air, "to destroy my enemies ; it is done, for I have made them my friends." *Go, reader, and do likewise.*

A very amiable and compassionate woman of the Calvinist Baptist persuasion, attended several Sabbaths on the

ministry of Rev. Mr. P*****, of G*****, who is also a strict Calvinist. Being asked how she liked, Mr. P. she replied, "To tell you the plain truth, I am not at all pleased with his preaching. Pray, how can that be, said the inquiring friend, since you are both Calvinists ? Well, I will tell you, said she, Mr. P. appears to be so much pleased with the *endless damnation* of the reprobates, and gives them up to the devil with so much cheerfulness, that I perfectly *abhor* to hear him pretend to preach, in the name of the *merciful Jesus* !—[*Christian Intell.*]

POETRY.

[SELECTED.]

PRAISE TO GOD.

Praise the Lord who reigns above,
And keeps his courts below ;
Praise the holy God of love,
And all his greatness show :
Praise him for his noble deeds,
Praise him for his matchless power ;
Him, from whom all good proceeds,
Let heav'n and earth adore.

Publish, spread to all around
The great Emmanuel's name ;
Let the trumpet's martial sound
Him Lord of hosts proclaim.
Praise him, ev'ry tuneful string,
All the reach of heav'nly art,
All the pow'rs of musick bring,
The musick of the heart.

Him, in whom we live and move,
Let ev'ry creature sing ;
Glory to their Maker give,
And homage to their King.
Hallow'd be his name beneath,
As in heav'n on earth ador'd ;
Praise the Lord in ev'ry breath,
Let all things praise the Lord.

NOTICE.

☞ In consequence of the frequent absence of the Editor of the *Inquirer* ; the agents and subscribers, are requested, in future to direct their letters to the **PRINTER**. It is also wished that our correspondents would recollect that their letters **MUST** come *post-paid*. There has been much neglect in this respect, the year past, and the office has been, consequently, subjected to much expense. The small sum required for the paper must render it obvious to every one, that the publishers cannot with propriety, meet the expense of postage. It is hoped that our subscribers will recollect the terms, ☞ \$1 in ADVANCE ☞ and that those who are in ☞ ARREARS ☞ with us, will *immediately* forward what is due.

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